

NAYS—43

Barrasso	Graham	Risch
Blackburn	Grassley	Rounds
Blunt	Hagerty	Rubio
Boozman	Hawley	Sasse
Braun	Hoeben	Scott (FL)
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Scott (SC)
Capito	Inhofe	Shelby
Cornyn	Johnson	Thune
Cotton	Kennedy	Tillis
Cramer	Lankford	Toomey
Crapo	Lee	Tuberville
Cruz	Lummis	Wicker
Daines	McConnell	Young
Ernst	Moran	
Fischer	Paul	

The nomination was confirmed.

(Mr. PETERS assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate, and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO SENIOR LIEUTENANT GENERAL NGUYEN CHI VINH

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to pay tribute to one of Vietnam's highest ranking military officers, Senior Lieutenant General Nguyen Chi Vinh.

General Vinh, who has served as Vietnam's Deputy Minister of National Defense since 2009, has played an indispensable role in the reconciliation between Vietnam and the United States. After more than four decades of military service, he is finally nearing retirement from the Ministry of National Defense.

General Vinh was born in 1957. He studied at the Institute of Military Technology before embarking on his long and distinguished career in the Vietnamese People's Army. His father, General Nguyen Chi Thanh, came from a humble family and rose to become a decorated military officer and politician. Today, one of Hanoi's main thoroughfares bears his name.

As someone who lived through the Vietnam war era, I remember it a catastrophe for both countries. The more than 58,000 American soldiers and other servicemembers who died, whose names are etched in the granite Vietnam Veterans Memorial, are only part of the story. We remember their families and the many tens of thousands who returned home with severe disabilities.

In Vietnam, virtually no family was unscathed. Hundreds of thousands are still missing among the estimated 3 million Vietnamese who died. The majority were civilians, whose families suffered grievous losses and severe hardships as the fighting raged around them. Many of their stories remain untold.

In the decades since, memories of that time have faded and the world's attention has turned elsewhere. Yet during the past quarter century since the normalization of relations with Vietnam, there has been a sustained effort by both countries to address some of the worst legacies of the war. By doing so, we have built a new partnership and set an example for other former enemies.

It began in the late 1980s with the first use of the Leahy War Victims Fund by the U.S. Agency for International Development, USAID, to assist people with severe war-related disabilities. That was authorized by President George H. W. Bush, after he and I discussed the need to assist Vietnamese who had been injured during the war. It led to funding by the State Department to locate and destroy unexploded landmines and bombs, which litter the Vietnamese countryside and have maimed and killed tens of thousands of innocent people, including children, since the war ended.

Nearly 15 years ago, those war legacy programs expanded to address the cruel legacy of Agent Orange, and it is in this that General Vinh and I became acquainted.

Since then, General Vinh has been my principal Vietnamese counterpart in working to address the legacy of dioxin contamination at former U.S. military bases and the needs of Vietnamese with severe physical and cognitive disabilities resulting from exposure to dioxin. I consider him a friend and am grateful for the hospitality he has shown me, my wife Marcelle, and other Senators when we have visited Vietnam.

From 1961 to 1971, the U.S. Air Force sprayed nearly 19 million gallons of herbicides in Vietnam, of which at least 11 million gallons were Agent Orange, in an effort to defoliate trees and shrubs and kill agricultural crops that were providing cover and food to North Vietnamese soldiers. Decades later, we learned that the Agent Orange was contaminated with dioxin, which can cause problems with reproduction, development, and the immune system. Dioxin can disrupt hormones and lead to cancer. It is also a persistent pollutant that can remain in the environment for many years.

Millions of Vietnamese were exposed, and hundreds of thousands suffered severe physical and cognitive disabilities. My wife Marcelle and I have met three generations of Agent Orange victims, from young children to their parents and grandparents. Hundreds of thousands of Americans who served in Vietnam were also exposed, and thou-

sands have been battling cancers for years.

Fortunately, thanks to studies funded by the Ford Foundation, it was possible to identify key "hotspots" with significant contamination, and working closely with General Vinh and USAID, we cleaned up the contaminated soil and sediment at the former U.S. airbase in Da Nang. Seven years and \$110 million dollars later, it is once again a busy commercial airport. In fact, Air Force One landed there in 2017, when President Trump visited Vietnam. That project would not have been possible without the leadership and perseverance of General Nguyen Chi Vinh, and I will never forget visiting the site with him when we formally launched the project in 2014.

Since then, we have moved on to Bien Hoa, on the outskirts of Ho Chi Minh City, the site of the largest U.S. airbase during the war where Agent Orange was stored and loaded onto airplanes. Today it is a shadow of what it once was, and it is contaminated with dioxin that has been leaching into the nearby Dong Nai River for half a century.

In 2019, General Vinh and I, along with Deputy Prime Minister Truong Hoa Binh and U.S. Ambassador Daniel Kritenbrink, and in the presence of eight other U.S. Senators, inaugurated a joint U.S.-Vietnam project to clean up Bien Hoa, including a U.S. commitment to contribute \$300 million over 10 years, half from the U.S. Department of Defense and half from USAID. I had several conversations with Secretary of Defense James Mattis about Bien Hoa, and the Pentagon's contribution is the result of his recognition that we have a responsibility and a national interest in helping Vietnam address war legacy issues.

At the same time, USAID launched a 5-year, \$65 million effort to expand our health and disability programs, which are being implemented in eight provinces that were sprayed with Agent Orange.

Over more than four decades, the Government of Vietnam has provided essential access and support in locating the remains of hundreds of American MIAs. This year, we are embarking on a 5-year, \$15 million program, jointly funded by the U.S. Department of Defense and USAID, to help the Vietnamese locate and identify some of their own people missing or killed during the war.

Much has been written, and I suspect more will be, about the collaboration between our two countries in addressing the legacies of the Vietnam war. Issues that for years were a cause of anger and resentment are today examples of how two former enemies can work together for the betterment of the people of both countries. These projects opened the door for the United States and Vietnam to cooperate on a wide array of other issues, from climate change and wildlife trafficking, to public health and regional security.